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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with a Test Information Service which is being tried out in Tama, Japan. The large scale field experiment of the new telecommunication system is called Coaxial Cable Information Service (CCIS) and was started in 1976. Preliminary findings included that: 1) users are interested in the experiment; 2) two-way communication systems are appreciated; and 3) quality of still pictures is a key factor in text information service. (HAB)

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New Telecommunication Uses in Tama New Town

— Summary —

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Introduction

This paper deals with a specialized factor in media ecology transformation, an entry in Text Information Service, a new species of medium. In Japan, a large scale field experiment of new telecommunication system called CCIS (Coaxial Cable Information Service) has just started this year. Intriguing findings at the preliminary stage of the exeriment are included in this paper.

1. Overall view of New Telecommunications Development in Japan

- Centering Text Information Services -

It should be pointed out that text information services are considered as rather premature in Japan. Most of them are in the laboratory stage, although they are esteemed for future use by some circles in the telecommunication industry.

1-1. Progress in Tama New Town Experiment (CCIS)

As will be described later, CATV industry growth rate in Japan has been relatively slow. The major reason is the amount of benefit expected to be obtained from it is modicum, compared with costs, especially when new services, such as text information services via CATV, are schemed. Therefore, Tama New Town Experiment and Higashiikoma Experiment are highly evaluated among people concerned with CATV movement.

(1) Experiment Objective

Major objictives are considered as follows:

i) To grasp the users' need of livelihood information through CCIS services.

ii) To seek the feasibility of commercialization of CCIS services as a livelihood information service project.

a. Development of CCIS software to meet the user needs.

b. Development of availability of CCIS services to meet the supplier needs.

iii) CCIS technological verification

iv) Arousing social interest regarding CCIS

(2) Experimental Environment Characteristics

An area of Tama New Town was assigned for CCIS experiment. Tama New Town, as a whole, is the largest residential city ever built in Japan. It is located in the northwestern hills of Tokyo suburb.

Total area of the New Town is about 3,000 hectares and target population is expected to be 330,000. It is now under construction, only a part of the town has been completed. At present, about 40,000 people are enjoying modern suburban life there. It takes about 40 minutes by newly constructed train to reach the middle of Tokyo.

The most important demographic characteristic of Tama New Town is homogeniety. As shown in Fig 1., most couples are of similar age, their children's ages are also similar. Another characteristic is scarcity of "community activity" in the Town.

Experiments are now under way in a block, called Nagayama, where 250 households are involved. Another 350 to 450 households will be added in the near future.

(3) Experimental Information Services

Experimental information services are shown in Fig. 2.

Among them, "requests for still picture service" is similar to text information service. Automatic repetition telecasting service, which is similar in some sense, is also provided.

(4) Configuration

The experimental system is outlined in Fig. 3.

(5) Findings at the Preliminary Stage

User's reactions have been surveyed by group interviews and questionaires, after two months experiment. Although detailed analysis of these surveys is under way, some findings are:

a) Users are intersted in the experiment.

After the experiment started, mass media such as TV, newspapers and magazines, have frequently introduced the experiment. Thus, people in the experimental block are much interested in the experiment.

b) Two way communication systems are appreciated.

Broadcasting and response service, which is providing educational programs, such as forign language lessons (English) and mathematics for children, is most popular of all services. Children are willingly participating in the programs.

c) Quality of still pictures is a key factor in text information service.

At the first stage of the experiment, still picture service has been unpopular, mostly because of its inferior picture quality. Users are always comparing quality of pictures between channels with each other, and tend to evaluate quality of service itself through quality of pictures they receive.

1-2. CATV movement and Text Information Service

(1) CATV Industry Trend

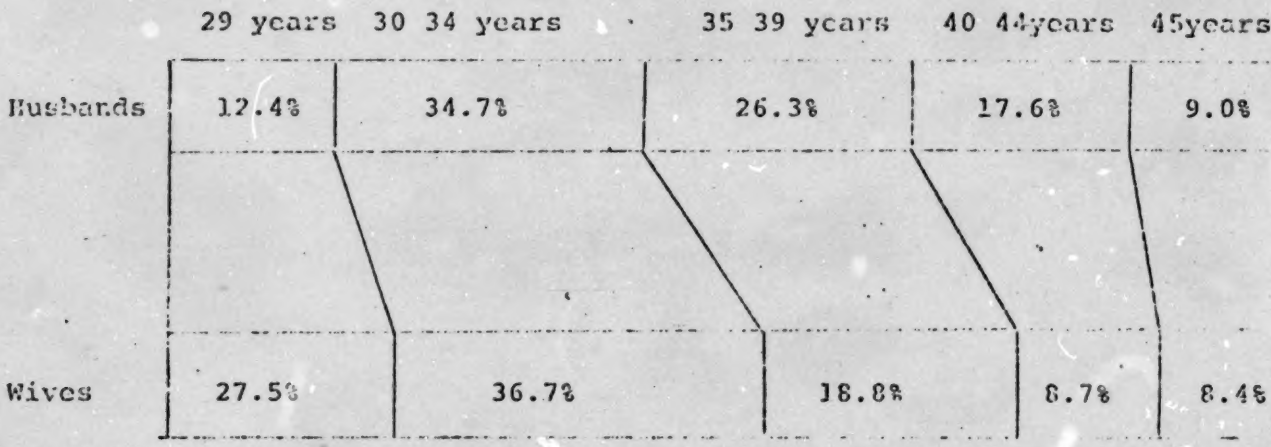
CATV industry has been growing less quickly than originally expected by people in related circles (cf. Fig. 4). Most of Japanese CATV systems are just at the first stage, only retransmitting TV programs. There are some CATV systems which are providing local origination programs in addition to retransmission. But all are facing financial difficulties. Therefore, there is no system which can afford to provide text information service "on request". CATV systems management personnel are now watching with intensive care the Tama New Yown experiment.

(2) Other Experiments and Text Information Service

Another larger scale experiment related to text information service has been planned at Higeshiikoma, near Osaka. Various terminals are now under development. They will be installed at households of the area in the near future.

The Multi-Purpose-Information-System Project, which will develop information systems for rural areas, is under planning, to enable constructing an experimental CATV system in Gifu Prefecture, but there is no idea to provide text information service at the first stage.

Fig. 1. Age of Husbands and Wives in Tama New Town



(as of 1975.3)

Fig. 2.

INFORMATION SERVICES (EXPERIMENTAL THEMES)

Of the CCIS service classification, the Tama CCIS will take up the following items:

				ITEM COVERED BY THE TAMA. CCIS	ITEM COVERED BY NATIONAL BUDGET
Broadcasting	One Way	TV type	retransmission	TV retransmission (VHF 7 ch.)	
			original broadcasting		Flash information service
					Automatic repetition telecasting service
			Original program	Package programs service	
				Original programing service	
				Hookup broadcasting service	
				Auxiliary television service	Pay TV service
		facsimile type		Memo-copy service	Facsimile newspaper service
Communication	Two Way	request type			Request for still picture service
		broadcasting with feedback type			Broadcasting & response service

Fig. 3.
TOTAL SYSTEM DIAGRAM

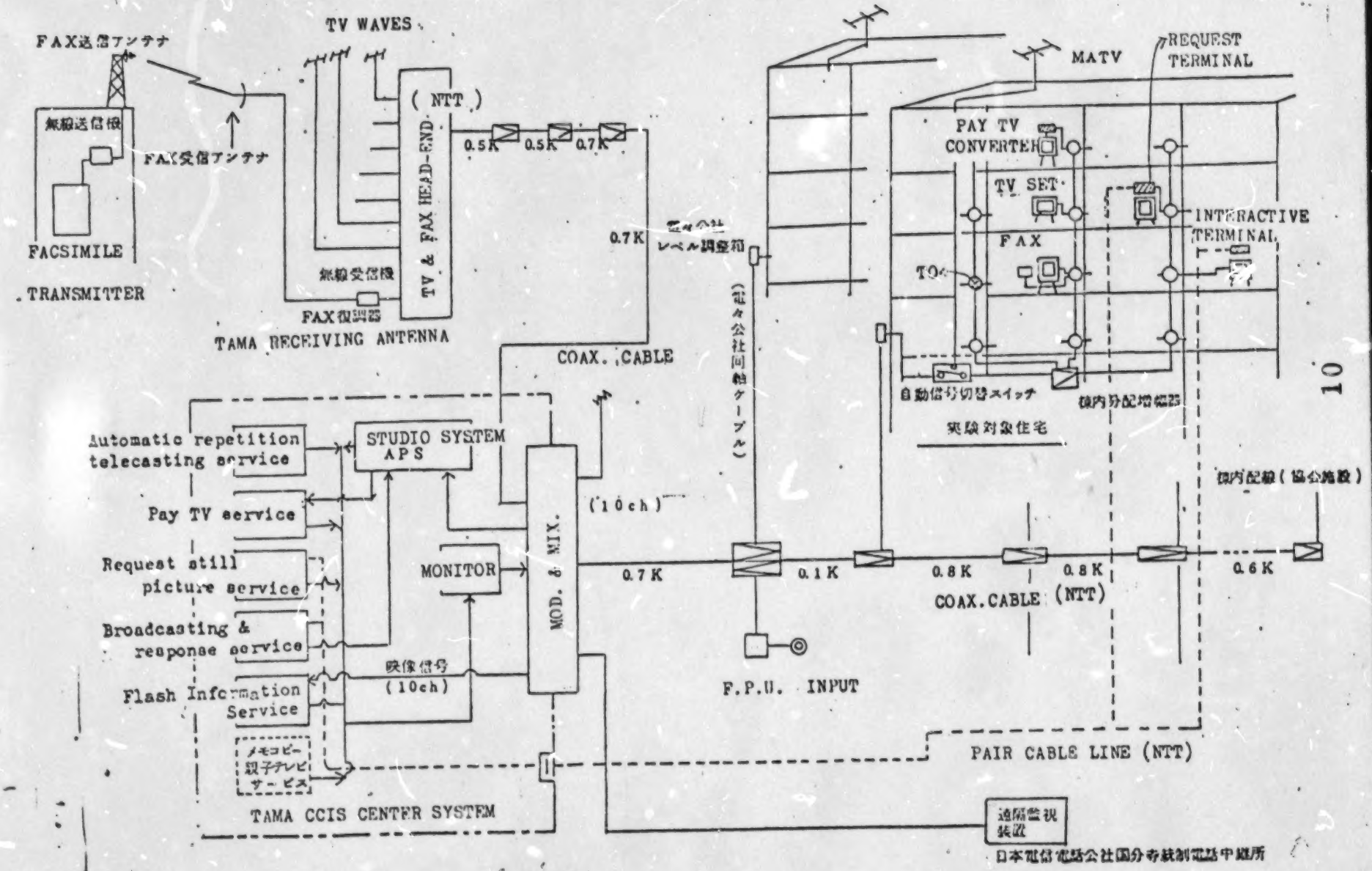


Fig. 4.

1. Growth of CATV Systems

No. of Terminals / year	~ 50	51 ~ 500	501 ~	Estimated No. of Total Terminals (Thousand)	Total
1964	-	-	-	-	4,795(100)
1965	-	-	-	-	5,741(120)
1966	-	-	-	-	6,358(133)
1967	-	-	-	-	6,883(144)
1968	-	-	-	-	7,296(152)
1969	-	-	-	-	7,544(157)
1970	-	-	-	-	8,509(178)
1971	-	-	-	-	9,502(198)
1972	4.274	5.586	137	-	9,997(208)
1973	4.819	6.500	149	1,170	11,468(276)
1974	5.574	7.514	156	1,240	13,244(276)